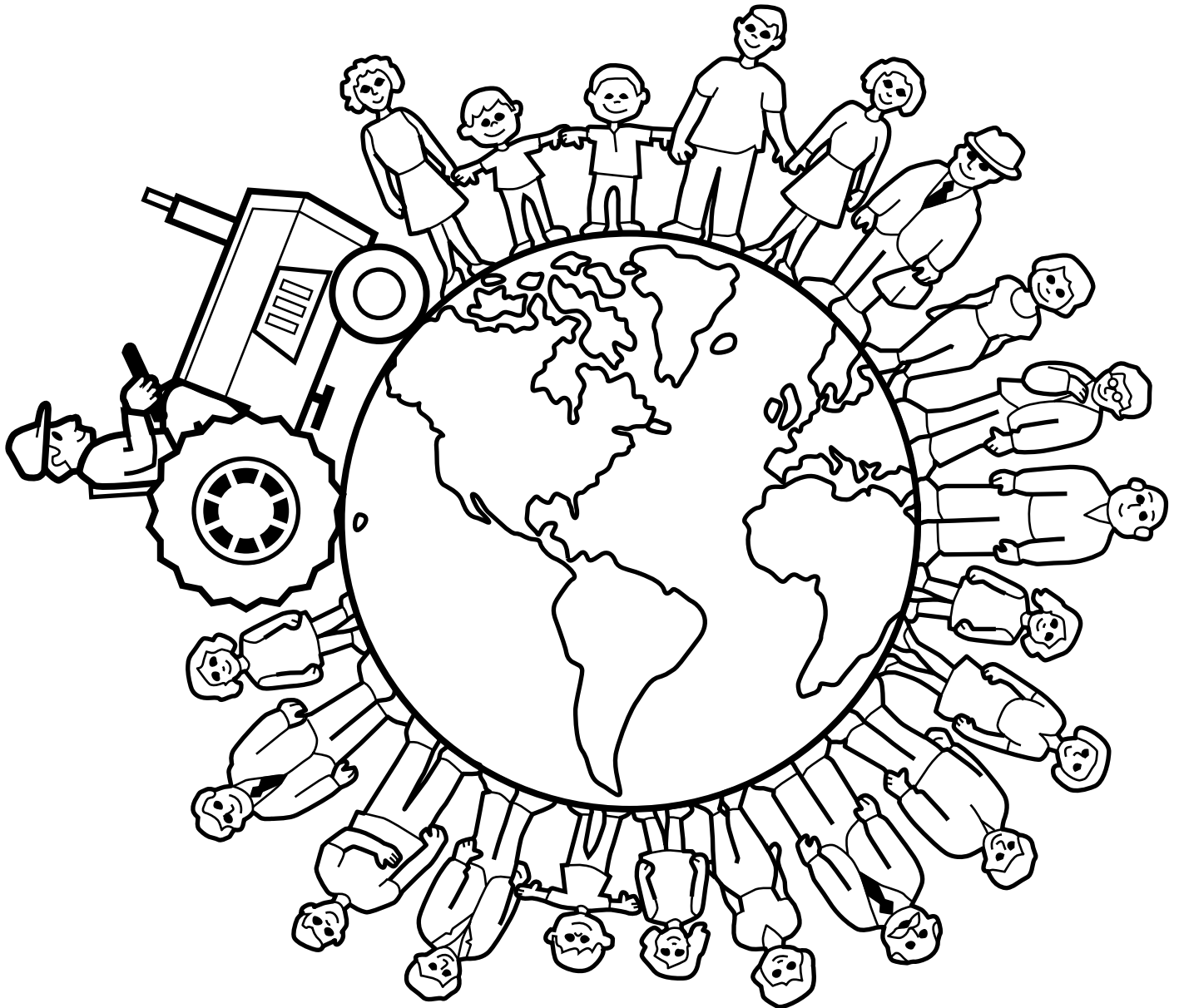


Hands on the Earth



Holding the Key to Life

Taking Care of the Earth and Taking Care of Us



Montana's farmers and ranchers are "hands on" caretakers of the earth. They work on the land to provide the food we eat and the clothes we wear from the soil and water of Montana. They hold the land, the key to life, in their hands every day.

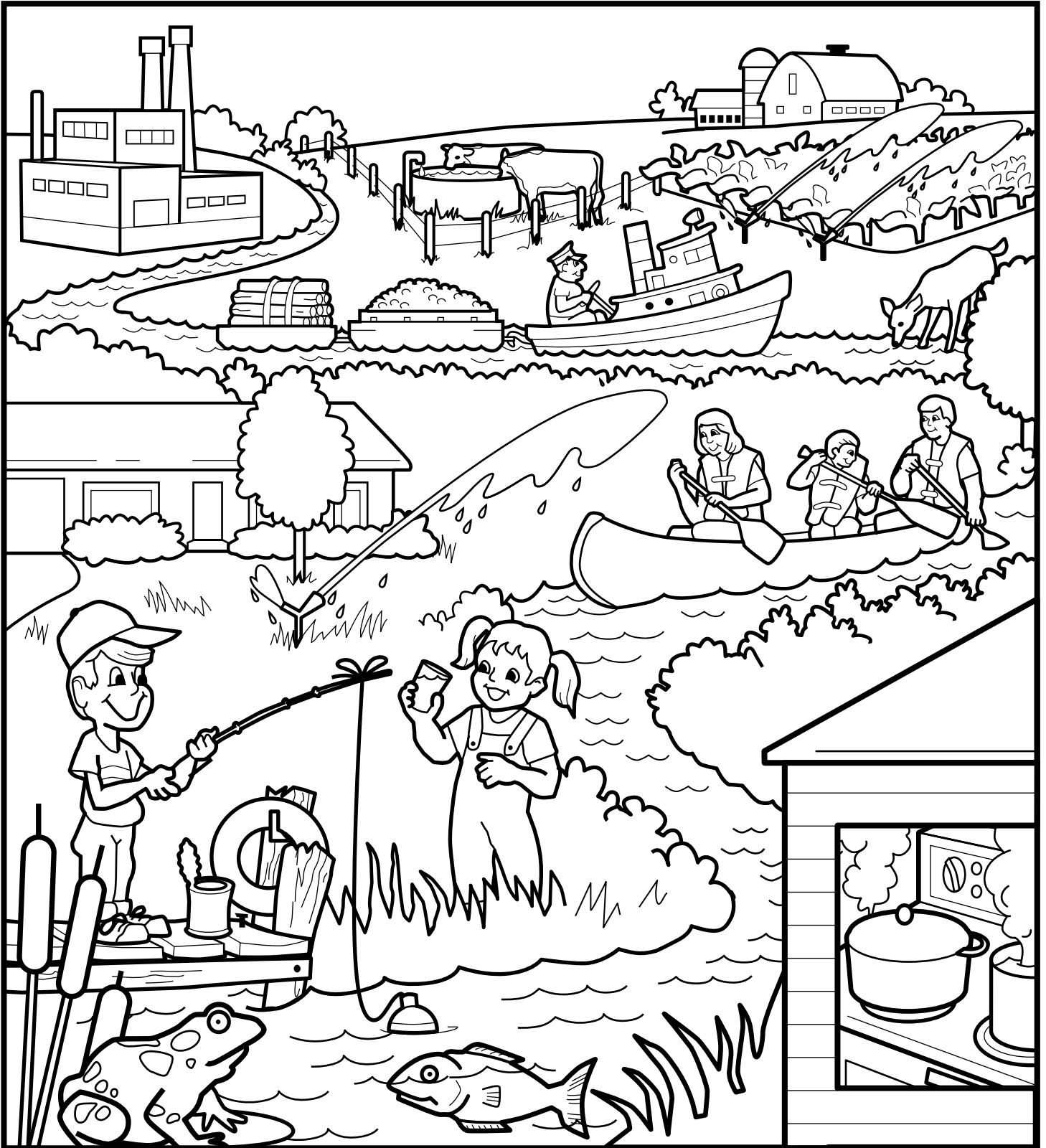
In addition to raising crops and livestock to feed and clothe us, Montana's farmers and ranchers do a whole lot more. They also care for all the things that the earth produces naturally such as forests, minerals, soil, and water.

It's a big job. Agriculture is Montana's largest industry, generating \$2.3 billion for the state. Nationwide, one American farmer produces food and fiber for 129 people—97 in the United States and 32 in other countries each year. One-fourth of the world's beef and nearly one-fifth of the world's grain, milk, and eggs are produced in the United States. The United States is the world's largest agricultural exporter and the world's largest donor of foreign food aid.

But they don't have to do it alone. Montana farmers and ranchers have help from many sources. One of them is the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), an agency within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). NRCS employees in Montana work hand-in-hand with farmers and ranchers to conserve natural resources on Montana's private lands. NRCS helps land users understand how natural resources relate to each other and to all Montanans, and how our activities affect the Earth's resources.

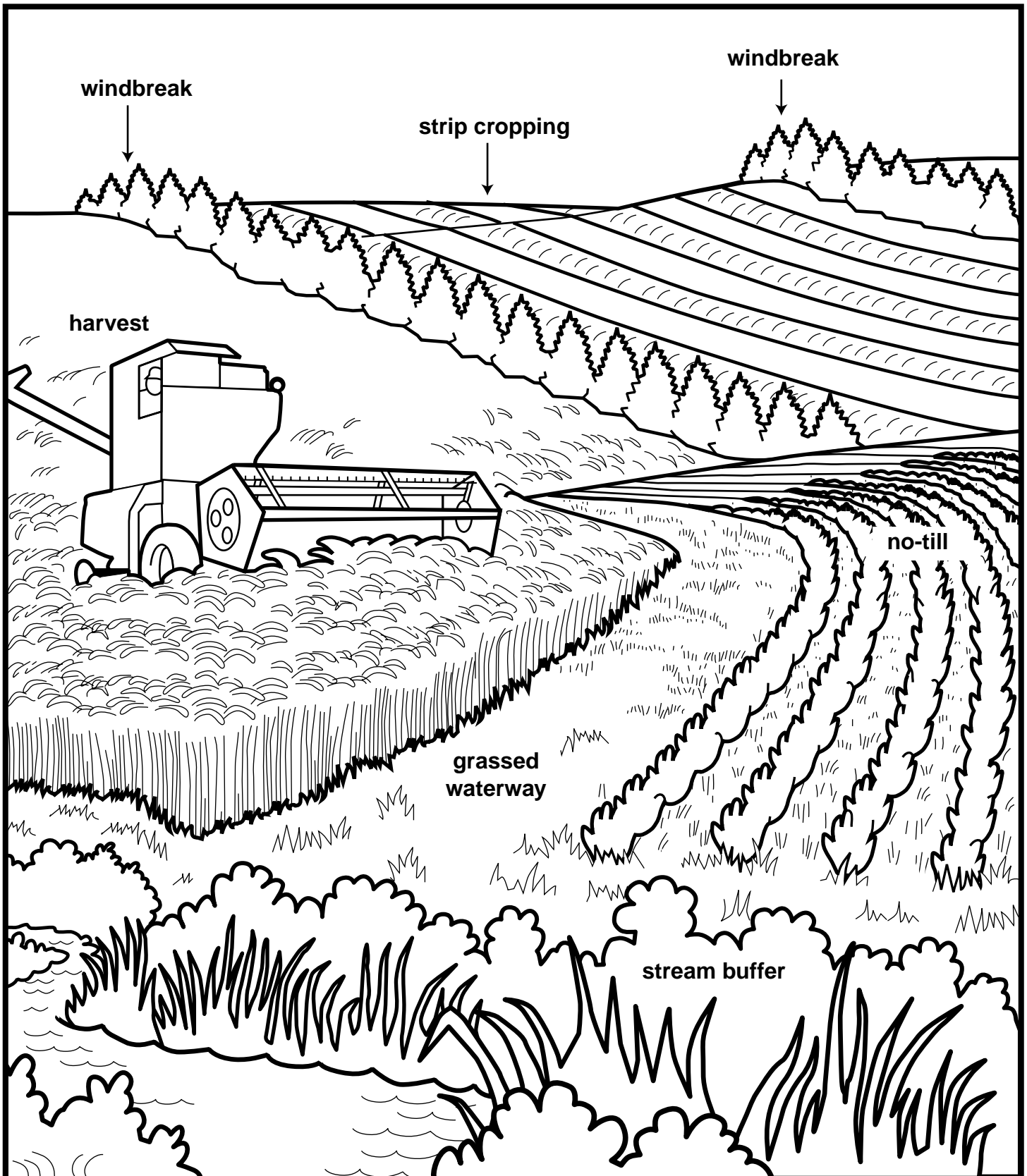
We All Need Water

Water makes all life on Earth possible. It connects all living things today and through time. In a never-ending cycle, water is used and reused by animals, plants, and people. The water used in Montana today is the same water that was available to the dinosaurs millions of years ago. Only one percent of the water on Earth is liquid fresh water available for human consumption. That's why it is so important for Montanans to consider all the uses for water and the impacts on water. Montana's farmers and ranchers do their part by installing conservation practices that help prevent sediments and pollutants from entering water sources.



Growing Crops and Conserving Soil and Water

Montana's farmers and ranchers are some of the most important people on Earth. With their hands, they help conserve the Earth's soil by planting crops that put nutrients back into the soil to keep it healthy. They also use "techniques" such as no-till farming that help prevent soil erosion. Since 1995, Montana's farmers and ranchers have cut soil erosion nearly in half by the different conservation measures they practice on their land. Color these conservation farming practices in the picture below.



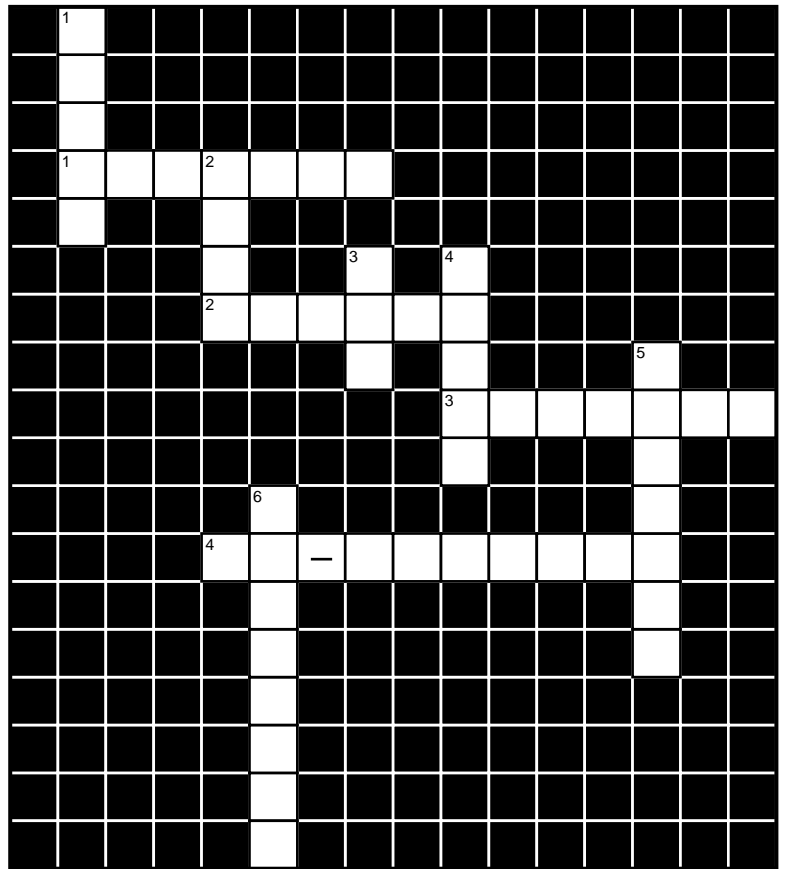
Crop Word Puzzle

ACROSS:

1. The physical wearing of the earth's surface
2. A species of plant farmers grow that adds nutrients back into the soil
3. Crops that are watered with only snow or rain
4. A type of land cultivation where the seeds are planted directly into the crop stubble left on the field

DOWN:

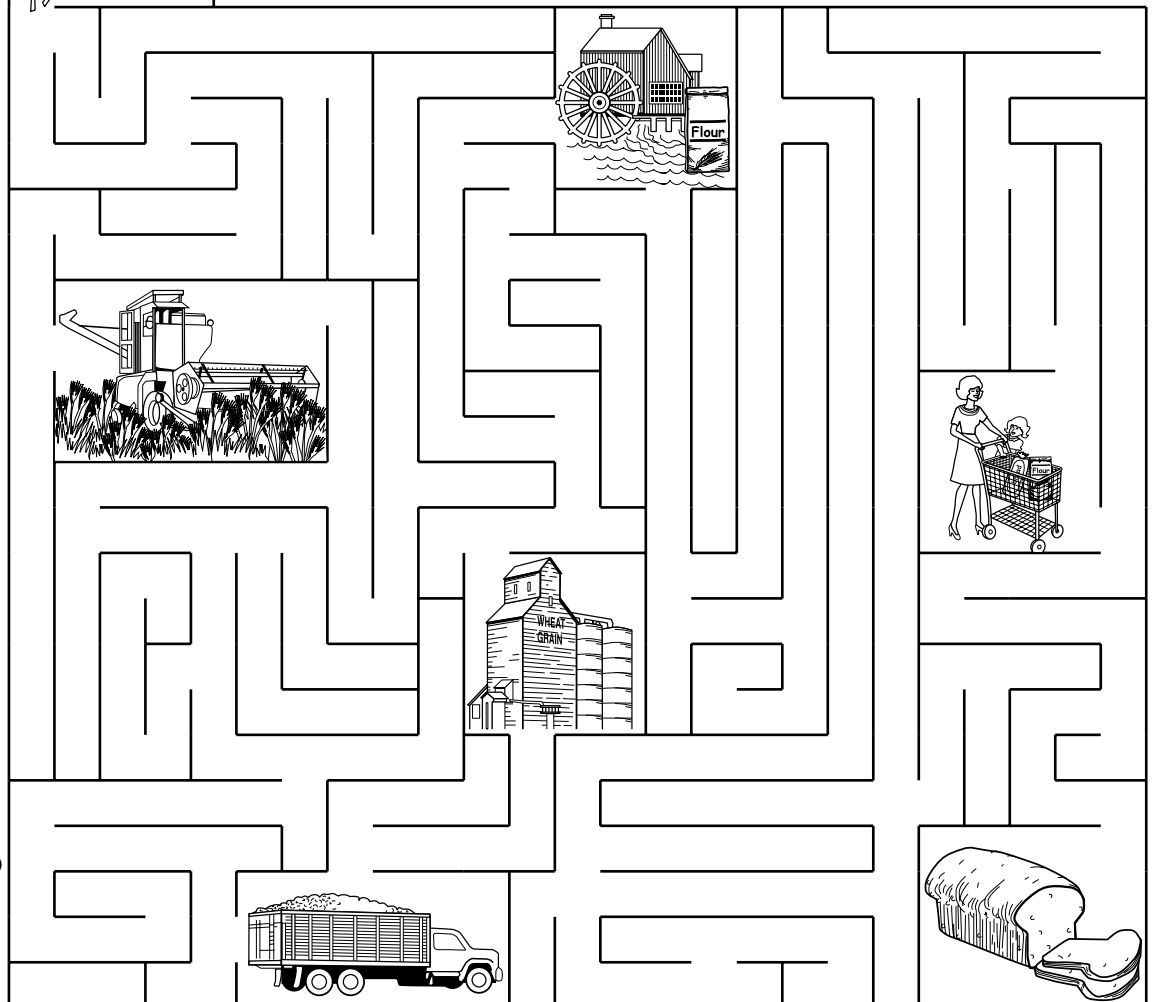
1. A clear liquid needed for all living things
2. A living resource covering the Earth's surface that supports plant life
3. What warms the Earth's surface
4. These are planted by farmers and grow into crops
5. Gathering the crop after it has grown
6. A conservation practice used by farmers when they ✕ alternate crops ✕ from year-to-year ✕ in the same field



Wheat to Bread Maze

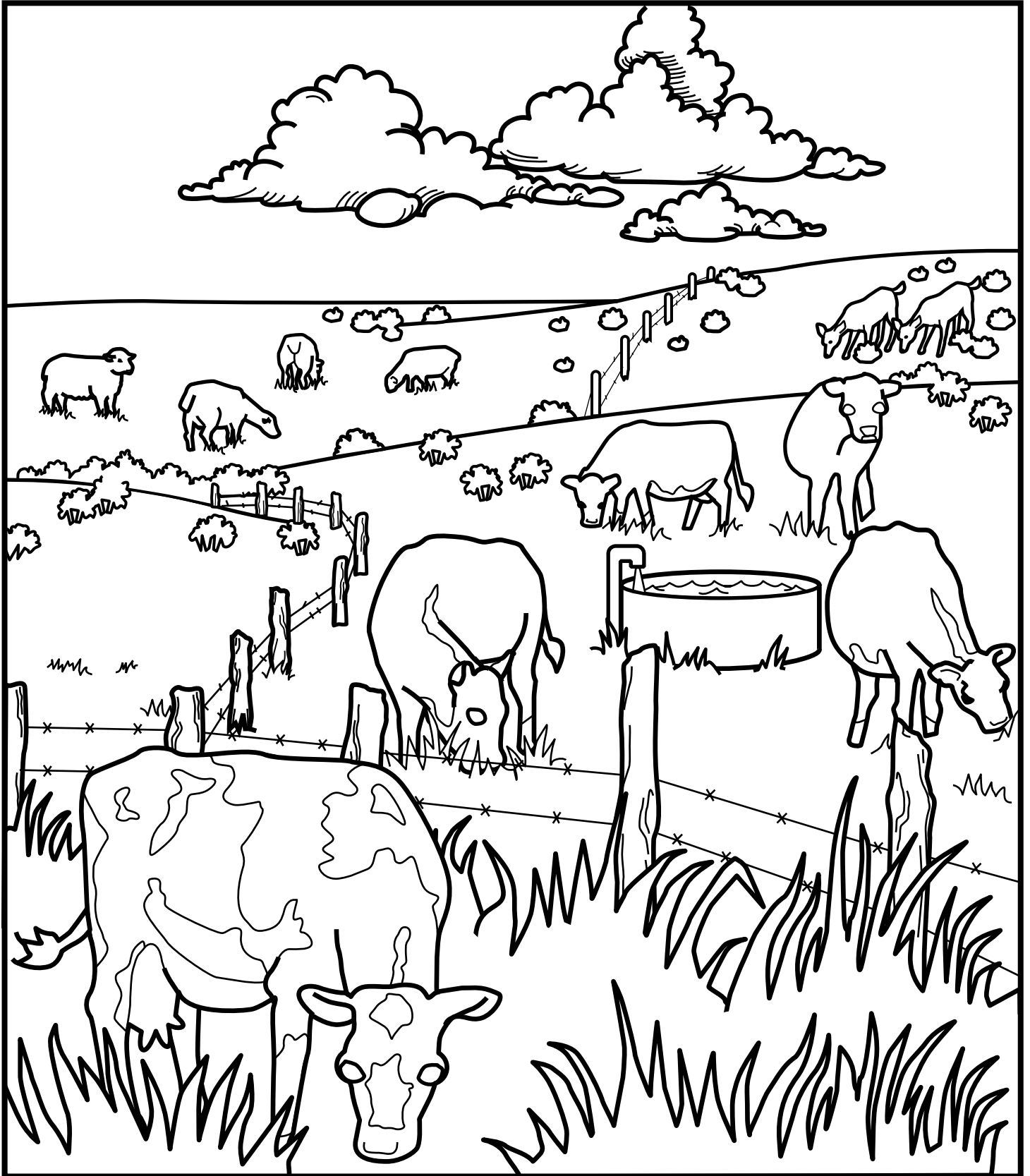
Have you ever thought about how the loaf of bread you ate a piece of toast from got to the store? It's because Montana's farmers and ranchers grew the wheat that was ground into flour, then baked into bread. Follow the maze to find the way from wheat in the field to bread on the table.

- harvesting the wheat in the field
- trucking the harvested grain from the field
- storing the grain
- grinding the grain into flour at the mill
- baking the flour into bread and selling it at the store



Raising Livestock and Conserving Plants, Water, and Soil

Montana's grazing lands provide scenic beauty, homes for wildlife, open space, clean water, food for livestock, and a way of life for many Montanans. The health of Montana's grazing lands lies in the hands of Montana's farmers and ranchers. It is their job to manage and conserve the soil and plants that provide food for the animals. Montana grazing lands support many kinds of livestock such as beef cattle, dairy cattle, sheep, and horses. It also provides a home for many different types of wildlife.



Did you know these facts about Montana's grazing animals?

- 70% of Montana's land area is grazing lands.
- Montana's grazing lands support 2.7 million beef cattle and calves.
- Montana ranks fourth in the United States for the amount of wool produced by sheep.
- Dairy farms in Montana produce enough milk to fill a football field 314 feet deep every year.
- Montana ranks sixth in the United States for total number of beef cattle.
- A cow will eat about 25-30 pounds of grass in a day.
- A cow doesn't bite the grass that feeds her; instead she curls her tongue around the grass blades and tears them.

Livestock Word Find

Find the products that come from Montana's livestock:

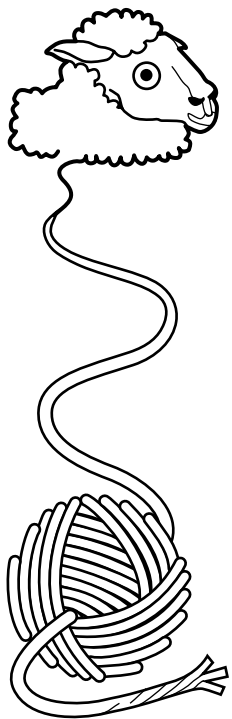
HAMBURGERS
STEAK
MILK
ICE CREAM
LAMB CHOPS
LEATHER COATS
SHOES
CHEESE
SWEATERS
WOOL GLOVES
PRIME RIB


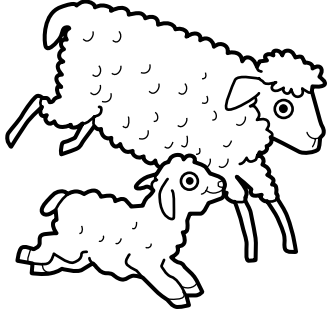

L	E	A	T	H	E	R	C	O	A	T	S
W	O	O	L	G	L	O	V	E	S	Q	Z
H	M	N	L	K	R	U	W	V	T	X	Y
E	L	H	A	M	B	U	R	G	E	R	S
S	S	P	V	A	W	Z	C	D	A	I	H
N	W	R	J	E	K	M	I	L	K	L	O
Q	E	I	M	R	N	O	R	S	E	P	E
L	A	M	B	C	H	O	P	S	Q	U	S
W	T	E	V	E	X	A	E	P	O	T	Z
D	E	R	L	C	O	E	J	T	H	E	Y
M	R	I	V	I	H	L	K	Q	U	E	E
N	S	B	W	C	P	E	F	G	H	N	S

Sheep Count



Begin at 7, count by 7's. Color each number until the wool is made into a sweater.



7	14	21	28	35	42
14	Montana has 432,000 sheep and lambs.	28	Montana's sheep and lambs produce 4.1 million pounds of wool each year.	49	
28		35		56	
35	Sheep's milk is made into cheese called feta cheese.	42		63	
44	61	48	84	77	70
49	 The oil from sheep's wool is called lanolin. It is used to make lotion.	91			
56	63	70	98	105	

